

Black History Month: Progress is Precious - Celebrating Excellence

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Ask Me Anything

Black History Month
Progress is Precious:
Celebrating Excellence

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM ET

More information:



Panelists



Ngina Matondo
Canadian Revenue
Agency



Baye Mohamed Mbengue
Environment and
Climate Change Canada



Dr. David Nanang
Canadian Food
Inspection Agency

Co-Hosts



Paul Galiba
Health Canada



Marie-Monique Jean-Baptiste
Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Featuring: Ngina Matondo, Baye Mohamed Mbengue, and Dr. David Nanang

Opening Remarks by Lyrique Richards

Co-hosted by Paul Galiba and Marie-Monique Jean-Baptiste

Date and time: Wednesday, February 19, from 1:00 to 2:30 PM EST

Audience: Open to all Government of Canada employees

Link to join: Join the event (https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NGFkYzJmYzEtNmNhZiooNTU2LThjMDYtZWJlNTYzYWl4MTUx%40thred.v2/o?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22325b4494-1587-40d5-bb31-8b660b7f1038%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22905de883-ee9c-42a6-bfee-cc866f97f03e%22%7d)

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Mission: Ask Me Anything series

#AMACHallenge

Join the live event

Resource Guide

Canada.ca

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Event description

Join us for February's Ask Me Anything event, where we honour Black History Month through an honest, open, and transparent conversation. This year's theme celebrates excellence in public service by highlighting and uplifting the voices of Black employees, with insights from public servants and inclusive leaders representing diverse backgrounds, departments, and life stages.

Our speakers will engage in real and raw discussions, sharing their multifaceted stories that shed light on the complex experiences of Black Canadians. These narratives provide a deeper understanding of the resilience, innovation, and contributions that continue to shape our nation.

Black History Month is a time to reflect on and celebrate the invaluable impact of Black individuals throughout Canada's history and into the present day. It is a call to embrace unity, togetherness, and the shared vision of a country where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Whether you're a new or seasoned member of the Federal Public Service, this event offers a chance to learn from our diverse panellists. Their experiences and reflections will inspire and equip you to navigate your public service career through a diversity and inclusion lens.

Don't miss this opportunity to join us on the Ask Me Anything stage and hear these powerful and sincere stories firsthand. Let's celebrate excellence together!

Meet our panellists

Opening Remarks



**Lyrique Richards, Administrative Staff Officer,
Diversity and Inclusion Office, Materiel Group,
Department of National Defence**

Lyrique Richards is a Human Kinetics graduate from the University of Ottawa and a proud third-year public servant with experience at Health Canada and National Defence. Born and raised in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, to immigrant parents from Jamaica and Antigua, Lyrique's Caribbean heritage is a cornerstone of her identity. From ten years as an Afro-Caribbean dancer to being an alum of the Afro-Caribbean Cotillion program, she carries her culture

proudly, using it to foster understanding and celebrate diversity.

Passionate about uplifting her peers, Lyrique is dedicated to inspiring those around her to embrace their authenticity and potential. A natural storyteller, she uses her voice to encourage and empower others.

Guided by her mantra, "Just do you, and you'll leave your mark," Lyrique is determined to make an impact.

**Ngina Matondo, Manager, production and Release Coordination Services,
Production Assurance Division, Client Service Management Directorate,
Canada Revenue Agency**

My name is Michel Marcelin, and I work for Health Canada as an accessibility Advisor I am a first-generation Canadian of German and Mauritian descent. I am a person with multiple disabilities, both mild physically and learning oriented. Over my life, having a disability was always part of my identity. Still, I never really fully embraced what this truly means and the value that it holds to myself personally until fairly recently, when I realized that it is really my "superpower."

You see, I always believed that we are MORE THAN just the sum of our parts! And this resiliency is literally what has saved my life many times over!! My life has been a lot about beating the odds! In fact, since the very beginning, I have been doing this. When I was born, after a few months, I became unresponsive to my parents with blank looks into nothingness often and like any loving parents, they were worried. They brought me to the emergency where, as a baby of 6 months, they did some tests and concluded that I had fluid in my brain.



And they decided to do emergency surgery to install a plastic tube that drains that fluid from my brain to my abdomen. This was done to keep my brain from expanding, for in the 1800s, this technology did not exist, and many babies died as their brains would implode.

So, I had this tube for 14 years until, in a high school exam, I had similar symptoms of headache and dizziness combined with vomiting. Which essentially called for an ER visit and emergency surgery to have said tube replaced.

Ironically enough, something similar recently happened a few weeks ago in October. And I spent days in hospital recovering from the same surgery.

Baye Mohamed Mbengue, Consultant, Environment and Climate Change Canada



Proud father of 3, proud African and eternal optimist. Mohamed started working for the federal government (Environment Canada ECCC) in 2018 after spending two years as a consultant for ECCC. He has a bachelor's in economics and political science, a certificate in project management and he is undertaking a master's degree in Environment. Mohamed volunteers the Senegalese association in Canada (RGSC) and in the union (PSAC), he is a local president and responsible for political action in the District of Montreal. He likes politics, reading, swimming, spending time with family.

Dr. David Nanang, Vice-President of Science, Canadian Food Inspection Agency



Dr. David Nanang is currently the Vice-President of Science at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Prior to this, he was Associate Vice-President of Operations for 2 and half years at the CFIA.

His previous experiences include Regional Director General for the Central and Arctic Region of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Director General at Natural Resources Canada's Great Lakes Forestry Centre in Sault Ste. Marie.

David is an adjunct professor at the University of Toronto and holds degrees in natural resources management, a master's in forestry (Lakehead University) and a PhD in forest economics from the University of Alberta.

Meet our co-hosts

Paul Galiba, Senior Project Officer, Health Canada



Paul Galiba is a results-driven Senior Project Officer at Health Canada, recognized for advancing diversity, inclusion, and digital transformation. Winner of the 2023 Deputy Minister Award, Paul brings over a decade of leadership in public service and the private sector.

With expertise in project management, event planning, and strategic advising, he excels in driving initiatives and fostering collaborative networks. Former President of CRA's Young Professional Network (2016–2017), Paul

holds a B.S. in Business Administration and an M.S. in Human Resource Development from Towson University.

Committed to excellence and continuous improvement, Paul's innovative mindset and dedication have made him a trusted leader in creating positive change.

Marie-Monique Jean-Baptiste, Co-Champion, Black Employee Network, Women and Gender Equality Canada



Marie-Monique was appointed on November 1, 2024, by the Deputy Minister of Women and Gender Equality Canada as a co-champion for the Black Employee Network. She has been involved in organizing activities for Black History Month since her arrival. Her interests encompass wellness and mental health, addressing racism and the anti-Black movement, and promoting equity initiatives. Notably, she has received three WAGE Deputy Minister's Awards of Excellence in 2022 and 2023 and a Québecor scholarship for cultural diversity.

Marie-Monique holds a master's degree in public administration and a Certificate in Project Management from HEC Montréal, a Major in Sociology from Université Laval and a Certificate in Social Work. Additionally, she has studied communications within a Media Arts and Technologies program.

Marie-Monique has built her career experience in project management, partner relations, event organization, communications, resource management, and policy development. She has worked with various government departments, including Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, Parks Canada, and Service Canada.

She participated in the Lifting as you Lead Mentoring Circle in 2023 and 2024 and interdepartmental initiatives from the Women's Black Federal Employee Caucus and FBEC. From 2007 to 2009, she created educational projects in Montreal for Black History Month, where nearly 1,600 attendees engaged with her presentations on the sensitive topic of slavery with a historical and non-judgmental perspective.

About the Ask Me Anything series

This session is part of a series of Ask Me Anything discussions that give us a platform to share stories, listen, ask respectful questions and continue on our journey towards more inclusive organizations.

As an individual, you can't necessarily change where you live. You certainly can't change your past, but you can adjust who influences you—through the authors you read, the music you listen to, the movies you watch, and the interactions with your community. The 'Ask Me Anything' series provides you with an opportunity to increase your perspective — to learn from the lived experiences of individuals who are bravely sharing their stories to help educate and move the public service towards a culture where equity is embedded.

The series also provides an opportunity for you to know that you aren't alone. These experiences, especially the negative ones, are systemic and can happen all too frequently throughout the public service. The objective of shining this light is to continually increase the network of public servants ready to take action and move forward toward a culture of inclusivity and belonging.

Mission: Ask Me Anything series

We recognize that individuals are composed of a multitude of layers that make us who we are. We do not fit easily in one box or another and we can't be neatly counted. We represent the mosaic of Canada.

It is important that we find value in each other's experiences, differences, and unique characteristics. When we build our cultural competencies, we can work better together in our teams and respond to each other with relevance, empathy and compassion. By celebrating and sharing our authentic selves, we gain greater appreciation of each other and the diversity that surrounds us.

We know through diversity, that workplaces and communities are stronger, more successful, and resilient. And most important, it creates spaces of inclusion and fosters a sense of belonging at work where people feel valued.

We encourage others to have courageous conversations with their peers. Use the monthly Ask Me Anything sessions as an opportunity to have brave conversations in your workplaces with your teams.

#AMACHallenge

Here's what you need to do:

- Invite your leaders and colleagues in your organization to an Ask Me Anything watch party, tune in live and watch the session together. Make sure it's on their calendar.
- Before the watch party, book an "After the AMA – Team Session" with your immediate team for the day after the event for 30-60 minutes. Share the resource guide and have these questions for discussion.

After the AMA: Team session discussion questions

1. What was my main takeaway? – Expand and share an amazing quote, story or moment

2. What made me uncomfortable/ what was one of my blind spots?
3. What is an example of systemic discrimination that I am aware of in my life?
4. What am I not going to do anymore?
5. How can I use my voice/influence? – both overtly/covertly
6. Where am I going to dig in and learn more?
7. How will I continue this conversation?

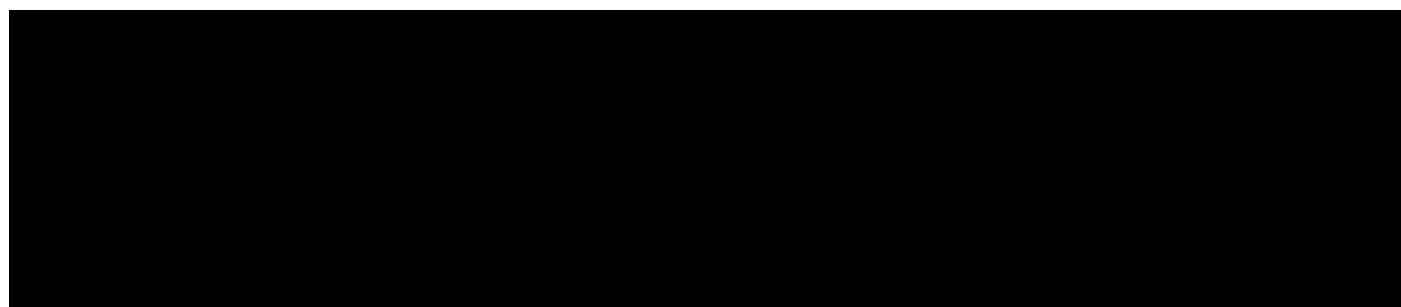
It is important that we find value in the experiences, and in the unique characteristics of each other. When we develop our cultural competence, we can work better together within our teams and respond to each other with relevant empathy and compassion. By celebrating and sharing our authentic selves, we gain a greater appreciation for each other and the diversity that surrounds us.

Join the live event (https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NGFkYzJmYzEtNmNhZiooNTU2LThjMDYtZWJlNTYzYWI4MTUx%40thread.v2/o?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22325b4494-1587-40d5-bb31-8b660b7f1038%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22905de883-e9c-42a6-bfee-cc866f97f03e%22%7d)

Resource Guide

Canada.ca (<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/maple-leaf/defence/2025/02/ask-me-anything.html>)

Session Recording



Post Event Article

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